

A Game of Owned

by SailorSilvanesti

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Summary: [Rise of the Brave Tangled Dragons, High School AU] Jack Frost, Merida Dunbroch, Hiccup Haddock and Rapunzel Solaris are popular for all manner of different reasons at NightFury High. But what they are most known for, is their pranks. An intricate story of their biggest prank (for graduation), and backstory... and how two couples found one another. [Jack/Hiccup, Merida/Rapunzel].

1. Chapter 1

****Disclaimer:** I do not own any of the fandoms or characters associated with ******_BRAVE_******, ******_TANGLED_****** **_How to Train Your Dragon_****** or ******_Rise of the Guardians_******.

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><p>This was initially a Fanfiction Request... and it grew exponentially into a multi-chapter monster.

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****For: ****[midgardianmindplace](#) [Tumblr]

****Fandom:**** THE BIG FOUR [Jack Frost, Hiccup, Rapunzel & Merida]/_Rise of the Brave Tangled Dragons_

****Pairing:**** Jack/Hiccup

****Notes/Specifics:** ******High School AU, 'cute fluff/romance', prank.

****_Alternate Universe/Timeline Fanfic._****

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><p>~*A GAME OF OWNED*~

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><p>'Och, are you sure about including the poor wee lamb in this one, Jack?" the redhead to his immediate right asked for possibly the fiftieth time in the last ten minutes, a severe jerk of the head indicating the timid-looking young man across the room from them. If they were caughtâ€| of all of them, he stood to lose the mostâ€|

The brunette they were both throwing surreptitious glances at visibly cringed when he heard the loud, deliberate stage whisper;-just as he had the thousand other times that the school archery champion had questioned his presence in *_the plan_**.

Doleful green eyes hit the pair with such force, it was all Jack could do to stop himself leaping across the room to hold the adorable guyâ€|

He punched Merida in the arm with just enough force to grab her attention to what he growled next, "_Enough, Mer_! He's here because he's a smart, brilliant, _wonderful _person with just the right skillset to get the job done, alright? And besides that, he WANTS to be here no matter what. So, no more of thisâ€| thisâ€| _SPANISH INQUISITION â€"ing _you have going!"

>Jack added a flourish to his speech that was every bit as Shakespearean as it was dramatic. Not surprising given that the deceptively delicately-featured teen was recently voted as, 'Most Likely to Become an Actor' after a big-time television representative had sat in on the last school play â€"_of which he was the lead, naturally_- and approached the white-haired teen with an intention to sign him there and then.

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Turns out, they were someone's aunt sitting in on the production in order to justify signing their own nephewâ€"_who had been playing a rather attractive tree in the background_- to some random soap opera for daytime viewing; the ludicrously dressed woman ended up finding herself unable to walk away without at least speaking to his parents, (or '_legal guardians'_ as she put it rudely when she realized the situation), about a future career in an upcoming serial drama â€"and television in general. He had decidedly played the charming, flattered child, but merely glared at her when her back was turned, abhorred at woman's terrible attitude when it came to meeting, and speaking with, his parents.

After much falsified pandering from one 'Ms. Jane Heddgcoomb of _Quintessential Studios_', his dads had said they would think about it, if only to get her to stop talking. She had wanted on the spot confirmation of signage, but they were unwilling to give permission for anything until after graduation, which was only a few short weeks away, at the time â€"because 'Father' had always been a stickler for making certain he had the proper education before anything else.

>Of course, the slur she had made at their refusal â€"behind their backs of course- had sealed the deal of for Jack, but he

didn't tell his dads what she'd said; the best thing he could do would be to reject her offer and give someone else the chance to discover him. Besides, if they both agreed to the idea of getting him a manager, he would finally have an in-road to discuss the offer his Uncle had made the other dayâ€|

That is, for Uncle P to introduce him to his own personal manager from _Nightmare Industries Inc_. which would be totally awesome as far as Jack was concerned.

Later on, when they'd gotten home, Jack had heard them arguing in the kitchen about the whole '_acting thing_', as he had been wiping the excessive amounts of stage make-up off his face in the upstairs bathroom; their echoing accents competing over one another to be heard.

Small wonder some of his newer friends often leant over and whisperingly questioned what one or the other had said to them. It was a miracle in itself the two had ever met, given they had been on opposing ends of the globe for the majority of their livesâ€| and yet here they were, the only parents Jack had ever known for _his_ entire life. From what the caseworkers had told him, his own biological ones had long since abandoned him in the emergency room of a small hospital a few towns over, with a note that simply said, '_I'm Sorry, Jack_' pinned to the tiny bundle of infant; leaving no indication of whose he was.

Occasionally at night he wondered about his parents, if they thought of him, what they looked likeâ€| if he had siblingsâ€| another family out there beyond his Dad and Father. Not that he didn't love them, that isâ€|

Jack couldn't imagine _not_ being a Frost, with all his whacky extended aunts and uncles and cousinsâ€| but there were times he looked into the mirror and wondered who he really was. Jackâ€| who?

At times like that, he liked to go and find Dad or Father and just sit with them, quietly, not saying a thing; and they knew, because somehow he always ended up being embraced and told he was the best thing that had ever happened to them. That he was perfect, brilliant, clever, their little miracle and a thousand other words of comfort where every syllable was as heart-felt and precious as gold. Jack truly loved his family like nothing on this earth; he couldn't imagine life without them, in all honesty.

There was tall, slim Father with oddly bluish hair that boasted a flare of white in a streak down the side; all manner of tattoos covering his tanned body and his strong Australian accent was warm and comforting. While he did have a sense of humour, certain things irked the manâ€| and his 'wonderful' son was not above exploiting that on occasion for a bit of harmless fun.

Jack often watched silly American movies and cartoons with supposedly 'Australian' characters in it, just to hear his father abandon whatever he was doing to storm into the room with murderous intent, right eye twitching, finger up in the perfect parental 'let me tell you a thing' pose and the '_That's not Aussie, THIS is Aussie_' rant boiling close to the surface. The man hated those false accents like nothing else on the planetâ€| and it was kind of fun to see Father in

a rage, because although excessively passionate, it was unusual to see him flustered or angry.

Oh, Jack didn't do it too often, of course, he did want to _live _after all.

Not that he was ever in danger of harm, thoughâ€¦ in fact, try as he might, Jack couldn't for the life of him remember a time when he had been even smacked for a wrong-doing by his parents. His dads were not exactly hippies with the whole, '_let the childrendo what they want_' mentality, rather they used a 're-directive' methodology to correct him when he erred as a little (and as his aunt tells it, _destructive)_ tyke.

Probably still used the method even now, though if they were, they were being quite subtle about itâ€¦

Father's real name was Edmund, and he was something of an author, mostly famous for a variety of children's series that delighted millions, but always under the infuriating pseudonym 'E.B.' for 'Easter Bunny'; it was a little joke he and Jack had had when he was threeâ€¦ and it stuck. Very few people knew who the renowned 'E.B.' was, which was fortunate, because some of his fanbase were (for lack of a better description) _raving, screaming lunatics with some of the most disturbing fanfictions Jack had ever read_. Uh, not thatâ€¦ _he_ everâ€¦ really went forâ€¦ _that kind of stuff_â€¦ of courseâ€¦

_Certainly _didn't have his own account on the books' fanfiction sitesâ€¦ nope, no way, _not on your li_â€¦ well, maybe he'd written a few dozen storiesâ€¦ or more like, kind ofâ€¦ closer to three hundred or so?

He had started to think Father was onto him, though, one night; because the infuriatingly intelligent man had randomly begun mentioning a very familiar username when he talked about his favourite fanfiction 'author' at the dinner table. The gleam in his eye as he spoke to his _trying-very-hard-to-feign-ignorance-and-failing_ son stated he had known more than he was letting on; suspicion rose as the teen's mind ticked over. Father's work left him home almost all the time, except for every odd Tuesday when he spoke on a national broadcast radio station to fans under his pseudonym; so he often surprised Jack after school, when the teen was on the computer, to tell him little things about upcoming novels that-â€¦ _Oh._

It was then that Jack had had *_the epiphany to end all epiphanies_**.

Father had been giving him dribs and drabs of errant information about his stories since he was little, things that never ended up in the books themselves; though maybe in an 'ultimate guidebook' to the series in question, a few years after the last book was published. Things he put in his fanfictions and, oh Man in the Moon, _Father knew_. He was doomed.

Apparently, the panicked look he had been giving his mashed potatoes had clicked with Father, because the man had laughed loudly for a good, long minute before quietly stating, "I knew, Jack, and in all honesty, I'm pretty flattered actually. You have talent in writing,

and I'm proud of youâ€¦| though I have to ask you â€œwithout judgment, mind you, little mate- if what I have read in some of your fictions is the explanation for some of your more disturbing Google searches. _We had been wondering_â€¦| you know, a boy at your age has certain needs, and we understand if-â€¦|"

Jack's blue eyes had gone wide, like a deer in headlights, and failed to respond. Noting that there was not likely to be an answer forthcoming anytime soon, Father had waved the matter away, smiling broadly. From the far end of the table, Dad barked out a laugh and continued to eat, letting them natter on silly topics for the rest of meal.

Then there was Dad; a tall, jolly figure in his memories of childhood, and yet also a calm, rational person who would put someone through a wall with his bare fists if they dared to look at Jack the wrong way. The tattoos lining the man's broad, muscled arms had always fascinated him when he was little, and sitting on Dad's lap, watching the man create something fantastic from seemingly nothing. A Toymaker and creator of dreams, the name of Nathan Frost was synonymous with quality, ingenuity and fun all over the globe; at first a small-time toy-shop owner, he was now a consultant for many big-name toy brands.

Basically, they paid him to create fantastic things, and then even more to show them how to make them as well; certainly, the idea his creations were being mass-produced irked Dad on occasion, but the man was never above taking an individual order from a child who really wanted something specific. He would do it for a coin, a lollipop or pocket lintâ€¦| whatever they wanted to give him was a wondrous gift to the hulking man. Dad would always smile and tell them that it was the perfect payment, that he would have it ready by the next day, and then spend all night making their dream come trueâ€¦|

Father always laughed when Jack brought it up, how Dad would push aside a dozen orders from toy companies around the globe to finish a special request from a little girl or boy; and the tanned man would smile, and kiss the larger toymaker's bearded cheek as he told their son, _'That's why I love him.'_

>Always eliciting deep laughs from Dad, who would always then reach over to pet Jack on the head, or ruffle his hand through the silky white strands of his hair while he intoned in that special way he did, "But we love you most, Jack, you are special."

They never let him forget that, either.

He was told something like that every day, just to remind him how important he was to them; it was an important ritual based on the past, and reached far into the future.

>Sometimes, mostly when he was little, but occasionally even nowâ€¦| Jack would wake up in a blind panic. Fingers clenching the bed-sheets convulsively , his breath coming out as short, ragged pants as the thought that this was not real raced through his mind over and over again until the pressure within built up to the point that it erupted in terrible screams of fear and anguish.<p>

He always ended up sobbing into the shoulder of whichever parent reached him first, a sure-fire method that soothed the anxieties in the moment and invited exhaustion to reclaim the pale child. But it never went away, not completely.

For some reason Jack always seemed unable to shake the feeling that this life was a dream and soon he would have to wake up; or worse yet, this was real, and if he did something -_anything at all_, wrong- he would be left alone again. This was not a fear that had been born from his own mind, thoughâ€| no, it was forced upon him a long time ago and the twisted seed had taken root in his subconscious; gripping his heart with fear in the dead of night.

The caseworker assigned to him when he was first taken into care as an infant had always impressed upon him from their earliest meeting, that if he ever found a family, he would be lucky; and that Jack would have to be polite, respectful and sweet at all times, no matter what was asked of him. Merely because a difficult, loud, greedy, sickly child was troublesome, and too much bother.

True, his parents had adopted him as an infant -all of five months old and already well ahead of the others in crawling, baby-talk and stunning good looks . He had apparently been in a nappy commercial at one point, but that was never talked about again, because it always made Jack flush scarlet when he thought of his naked behind flashed to the world through the medium of television.

However, given his status as an abandoned child, and the adoption process, it meant continued liaison with the Department of Children's Services. And although the large, oddly-manicured woman (who always smelled strongly of funny flowers) scared him when he was small, he took her words to heart.

Children always trust too easily.

In the few minutes alone they had each month for their check-in meeting, 'Shannia' would always drill into young Jack that he had to behave, or his new parents would call her to take him away, and he didn't want _that _now, did he?

>Jack remembered shaking his head so strongly he'd given himself a headache and begun to cry, at which point, Dad had caved the locked door of the room in, while Father demanded to know what she was saying to upset him. The woman had smiled sweetly and responded with, 'Nothing out of the ordinary, I assure you.' as Father picked him up and handed him to Dad, forestalling the larger man from pounding the woman through the carpeted floor with his bare fists.

That had scared Jack, the idea that he had upset them; not the fact that his dads might be violent because of himâ€| so he cried even harder, thinking that this meant he had to go and live with the awful lady now. They left quite quickly after that, with the woman's manager trying to alternate between placating the angry pair of parents and telling 'Shannia' off for what he had seen on the small interview room's surveillance tape.

He barely remembered anything after that, other than the deep red of Dad's jumper, which his pudgy four-year-old fists clutched tightly, 'like a baby koala', Father had said gently while trying to pry him loose and place Jack into his snowflake-covered car seat.

He never told them, not even when they drove away, or when Father held him on his lap that night as they watched the Wiggles movie he'd gotten for his birthday the month before; they must have guessed

something was wrong, because he remembered crying all the way to bed, long after his headache had been settled by some nasty-tasting cherry medicine. The little boy had drifted to sleep with Father's hand stroking his hair, and the angry sounds of Dad yelling into the phone downstairs.

No matter that he never had to see the woman ever again, and was given a lovely elderly woman named Jane, for a caseworker, who treated him like a grandchild; Shannia's message was stuck in his head, resonating in every inch of his subconscious. So he tried to be quiet, helpful and obedient, never demanding a thing or telling his new parents if he was ill, because he never wanted to worry them. Just being with them was reward enough for suffering through little bouts of sadness all children deal with, completely by himself.

It wasn't until one occasion when eight-year-old Jack had managed to conceal a rather high fever until it got so bad he collapsed in the lounge room â€"batman pyjamas soaked through with sweat_ and had to be rushed to the hospital, that they caught on. That night, when he was stabilized, his parents sat by his bedside and explained that no matter what he did, he was stuck with them. That was the exact phrasing they used, _stuck with __them_. Those three words made such a difference.

The child Edmund and Nathan Frost took home the following Friday was a slightly louder, more boisterous, energetic, artistic and fun-loving creature than the one they had frantically rushed to the medical center a week earlier. He had finally learned it was okay to make Music (well technically 'noise' was a more accurate description), Mess and Mistakes; the '_three M's_' as Father would smile.

As a child, Jack's room had been utterly filled with every toy the pale little boy could ever even think to want; almost as if they saw his deepest dreams and desires -_things he would never think to ask for in case it made him seem like a greedy brat_- and made them real to please him. Yes, the only thing that ever stopped his Dad from finishing a toy for a 'special order' was if he felt Jack needed something specialâ€| usually when he was ill, which happened rather frequently, annoyingly enough.

Jack loved the snow, it was the one thing that exasperated his parents no end; the moment white powder touched the ground, the boy would be out in it; regardless of what clothes he was wearingâ€| or lacking. Father usually rolled his eyes and shoved Dad out the door to deal with him; Dad loved the snow too, he had grown up with it, while Father had little tolerance for the cold and only seemed to revive on days in Summer when the sun beat down oppressively.

If Jack could not be caught immediately, and that was a usual occurrence, then a snowball fight usually ensued; tiny frozen missiles whizzing back and forth across the front lawn as Father stared out the front window, a steaming cup of cocoa in one hand and a small smile of contentment on his face as he watched 'his boys' enjoy themselves. It was always about the part when the pair began to create a snowman that he would leave the viewing spot and wander off into the house, fetching warm clothes and running steaming-hot baths in the separate bathrooms for when the pair decided to burst back inside in the next few minutes; chilled to the core but content.

Despite Father's foresight, four times out of every ten forays into '_that bloody mad white stuff out there_', Jack tended to catch some illness or other that dampened the boy's spirit for a short while; but never enough to act as a cautionary tale and prevent Jack from doing the exact same mad dash into the snow that landed him unwell in the first place, the moment he got better again.

Still, despite his snow-born eccentricities, he knew his parents loved him deeply. They were the best family he could have asked forâ€|

Oh, there was Aunty Tootiana and Uncle Sandy too, and his few dozen cousins â€"he'd lost track of exactly how many of them there were or what they were all called by now, but always managed to end up under a pile of giggling little girls whenever they came to visit. Heh, Jack had always held a sneaking suspicion that if he'd asked for it, a small army of adoring little girls would overrun the Earth and installed him as supreme leader; and there were days where he couldn't deny he was sorely tempted to mention it to one of the 'Baby Toots'. They all resembled their mother, but had their father's sandy-golden hairâ€|

Aunty Toot was a dentist, so naturally that meant he was given an impromptu check-up everytime she came around, and he had to hide any non-sugar-free candy lying about the house; or he'd get a heck of a lectureâ€| but she was such a sweet person. Always ahead of the chaos, calm in the face of _small giggling girl-a-geddon_, organized, had a bit of a thing for flashy professional wear, was kind and fiercely protective of her girls â€"_and Jack_, of course- his Aunt was just the _best _person. She was married to Dad's twin brother, Uncle Sandy; who was the most fascinating artist Jack had ever seen, able to express things that words simply couldn't.

The story his Grandfather Manny had told the boys when they were little was that Grandmother Luna had caught a particularly nasty strain of rubella while she was pregnant with the pair of them, resulting in a few unusual discrepancies. For twins, the two looked nothing alike; where Dad was tall, bearded and loud, Uncle Sandy was short, clean-shaven, of golden-hair and silence â€"he'd been born mute, you see. Not that that had ever stopped Uncle Sandy from getting his point acrossâ€| though his parents had warned the shorter man that a few of hisâ€| erâ€| 'hand-signals' were definitely out of the question in their householdâ€|

Seeing them together was always an odd experience.

There was also this one odd Uncle, Father's half-brother or something, they looked absolutely nothing alike, had different accents and fought like-â€| well, for some reason the analogy 'rabbits and foxes' always came to mind rather than 'cats and dogs', oddly enough; though the pair never sparred verbally in front of him, it was like a silent agreement the two had made. Father tolerated the inclusion of Pitch simply because he just adored being an uncle, and was always there to lend a hand; he just wanted to be involved. Grudgingly, Father allowed it only because of how much Jack adored him in return, and what a brilliant influence the man was on his son.

Jack always smiled and greeted Uncle 'Pitch' as warmly as he could,

but usually by the end of any visit, it was a bit of a free-for-all sass-fest between the two; kind of felt like having an older best-friend-slash-mentor. Uncle Pitch was a bit of a celebrity at the moment, having recently played a small role in a huge up-coming action blockbuster with several well-known namesâ€| he was Jack's secret weapon. Helping him to improve his acting abilities and self-confidence in general; taking him from the shy, nervous, teen always contriving to be invisible in a room full of peopleâ€| to the school's darling pin-up boy, in under two years. As his uncle always said, '_It's all about confidence, Jack.'_

And now his Uncle's tutelage had paid off, it seemed, Jack recalled thinking as he listened to their parents loudly discussing the prospect of him as an actor.

Dad was being jovial and excited at the wondrous prospect of having raised a future 'big screen actor', whereas Father was not so enthusiastic, probably already fretting over the potential stressors coming their son's way if he did pursue a career in acting. To be fair, Jack had worked hard in school and was pretty decent in biology, which meant he would always have the grades to slide right on in to medical school if acting didn't pan outâ€| but he kind of hoped it did. Because he knew a certain someone who might be a pretty good trophy husbandâ€| er, not that he'd ever actually talked to the guy yet; more like longing from afarâ€|

Hehâ€| kind of a necessity if you'd seen the kid's dad. Even in pictures it was plain to see that he was one HUGE fellowâ€|

In any case, the two had eventually ended up talking it out and decided that now was not a good time, not with graduation that close; and Father just wasn't sold on that woman being his manager at all. Father had still seemed upset about something, you could feel the tension in the air.

Finally, Jack had heard him say, "Did you hear what that bloody woman said when our backs were turned, Nate? Did you? She probably didn't realize I've got ears like a rabbit and could hear her, the _rude bi-_â€|"

"Be that as it may, my little warrior bunny," intoned Dad over the top of the coming profanity, using the pet name for Father that always calmed him down no matter what â€|_though neither would explain the context of it to Jack, as of yet_. "You must remember our little snowflake can probably hear us from up there, can you not Jack?"

He had quite literally started so badly he'd fallen off the stool and taken out half the contents of the bathroom sink as he went, before guiltily replying, "Uhâ€| m-maybe? I meanâ€| perhaps a _litt_-â€| yeah, I was listening. Sorryâ€|" he paused, "I, uhâ€| didn't think you heard what she said, but I was going to ask you not to sign me to her." His voice was raised so they could hear it from the downstairs area, and it had echoed oddly off the walls of the navy blue tiled bathroom.

As he stood up, hastily snatching the tubes of toothpastes, tubs of hair gel, a bottle of mouthwash, someone's hand-cream, and a displaced bar of lavender-soap from all over the bathroom floor; Jack remembered waiting for a reply with bated breath, and only receiving

ruminative silence. Suddenly, footsteps echoed on the stairs.

Dad pushed open the thick white door, amusement animated his face as the full scale of the teen's accidental destruction of the bathroom; Jack smiled up at him with a caught-with-hand-in-cookie-jar expression, arms full of toiletries and many more lying about at his feet. The expression softened as a certain slick bar of soap made its quick get-away straight out of the pale palm holding it and shot across the floor

"That wasn't meant to do that" Jack had laughed nervously, dumping the rest of the items on the counter and slid across the tiles in his socks in pursuit of the errant lavender-scented escapee. A large hand clamped onto his shoulder, and he froze instinctively; slowly turning to face his dad with the best puppy-pout-cross-'_don't ground me_' expression he could muster.

"Jack," his name always came out with a strange rolling warmth when Dad said it, "Your Father and I are sorry you had to hear zat, it was not meant for you but we have decided, as you have no doubt heard my sneaky little snowflake, zat if you want to pursue acting in future we will support you. You know this but your Father and I, we feel zat" here the man made a shaky-hand gesture to support his words, "zat woman did not have your best interests at heart, so we will speak to your Uncle Pitch about _his _agent."

At the excited glance Jack gave him, the man hummed pleased that his son was happy; the lanky teen flung himself at his Dad and hugged him as best he could, arms not quite reaching around the middle enough to touch, his father laughing happily at the action. He loved the rumbling vibrations that tingled through him when his Dad let out a deep, belly-laugh

"BUT," Father had interjected, "as brilliant as you are at acting, little mate, we won't be discussing this until after you graduate and you will be applying to whatever college you want, for medicine or whatever you decide. Now, I know that seems like we're well _I'm_ being unfair but this is really all about what's in your best" "

He was cut off as the white-haired teen flung himself at the Australian parental unit, hugging him tightly about the chest; Father's expression was one of confusion, brain still stuck back on the rather bungled _'We love you, so we're making this decision for you'_ speech he'd worked hard on while coming up the stairs.

A tanned hand found it's way into the white hair tickling his chin, ruffling it, "Ah, skipper, look at you all grown up and still has time for a hug"

Peering upward had rewarded Jack with a vision of his Father looking somewhat softer than usual, but also flushed; tenderness was not an innate emotion generally portrayed by the Aussie author, not under normal circumstances anyway. Jack smirked, because he knew the bruffness was only semi-serious, the majority of it was a front Father used to maintain his image; though the teen never doubted his father could kick the tar out of anyone who threatened him he'd witnessed it with his own awe-stricken eyes on two separate occasions.

"Ho, he takes after you very much, my dear Bunnymund," Dad said, beaming with pride and swept them both into a hug as both Jack and Father mock-protested.

"Alright, Nateâ€| that's enough!" laughed Father, "Certain people in this hug have to be up at insane hours of the morning to go speak on a radio, you knowâ€| kinda _need the ability to breathe_ in order to do that. Oh, and I know a _certain person_ has a Biology final in first period, so I'll be sure to wake that person up on my way outâ€|"

Jack groaned dramatically and slid to the floor the moment he was released, "Ugh, all these examsâ€| I swear it's driving me nutsâ€| why can't they just let me graduate already?" He gave his parents a long-suffering glance before adding, "Why does growing up have to be so _haaaaaaaaaaaaaaard_?", trying to really sell the performance with the sad expression he was now sporting, and was rewarded with synchronised eye-rolls, and raised eyebrows.

Dad barked out a laugh and lifted the lanky teen over his shoulder, ignoring the wiggling and protesting Jack immediately began in response. "Would you prefer to be our little _itty-bitty baby Jack_ again, instead? Is this so? It is? Then so we shall! Come along, my bunny, we must tuck our precious little snowflake into bed and read him a storyâ€|"

Jack had gone red in the face between fits of giggles he would never admit to having the next day, gently pounding his fists against whatever parts of his father he could reach from his undignified position of slung over a broad, red-clad shoulder; there was a tinge of embarrassment in his cheeks, flaring like a beacon.

That night had been one of great hilarity, involving the pair of them acting as if he was merely a very large four year old once again; from the 'have you brushed your teeth?', and tucking in the _highly embarrassed-but-secretly-loving-it_ teen, to the two reading him one of the stories he loved as a child, and saying goodnight with a caution about bed-bugs as they shut off the light. Sure, he may be seventeen years old, but it still felt nice to have parents who really cared like thatâ€|

His dreams that night had been filled with exciting possibilities of what his future might hold after graduationâ€|

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To Be Continued...

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><p>So, that was chapter one... I'm re-reading and editing the others at the moment.<p>

Let me know if you liked it, or hated it.

**~*SailorSilvanesti/Phoenix Fire*~**

2. Chapter 2: When Earth Devours Sky

****Disclaimer:** I do not own Tangled, How to Train Your Dragon, Brave or Rise of the Guardians; nor any associated characters, I do however, toy with them for fun...******

The long-awaited chapter two, which has taken several months to export from a crashed hard-drive.

Enjoy.

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****Chapter 2: When Earth Devours Sky****

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The long, exasperated sigh Merida exuded from close by his ear snapped Jack back to reality with a jerk; he'd somehow wandered into his daydreams again, which were getting far more frequent the closer Graduation got. It was as if a burden had been slowly being removed from his shoulders, inch by meticulous inch, over the last four weeksâ€|

Little things like concerns about his image, whether his clothes were right, fear of rejection from the 'in'clique, the continuous struggle for perfection balancing out his intense fear of failing, stage-fright, that one Chemistry test he flunked two years ago and those odd bunch of unspoken rules that all High Schoolers seemed to adhered to suddenly appeared soâ€| _so petty_, paltry, childish, preposterous and utterly ridiculous now he looked back on them. None of that even _mattered _anymoreâ€|

Occasionally Jack would pause as one of the silly little rules he'd adhered to would spring to mind, and suddenly, he'd be laughing; finally understanding why the seniors had always had that odd little smirk on their faces as they watched the grade eights each yearâ€| trying their hardest to conform and be invisible, instead of just doing what they wanted. How strange it was that a building could make people change who they wereâ€|

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"Jaaaaaaaaaaaaack, you're doing that over-thinking thing again! I can tell because you've gone and gotten that creepy smirk on your wee peaky face again," the fire-haired female said directly in his ear this time. "Hoots, manâ€| do you never get to see the sun where you live? Not that your house isnae brilliant, but you sort of look like a brooding vampire staring at the little lamb over thereâ€| it's quite concerning. Don't make me have to go and get mae arrows tae defend his honourâ€|"

Now, it may just be Jack's interpretation, but he definitely saw

something malevolently insinuated in that last eye waggle she threw in his direction; he could already feel his cheeks flushing. "I-It's not like that!" he choked out, ice-blue eyes wide with surprise, fingers crossed behind his back becauseâ€| well, it was lucky that Merida couldn't read his mind on occasion; because there was every chance the archery champion would shoot him for some of the more vivid daydreams he'd had about the brunette.

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His association with Merida went way back to the time when he was a tiny, pudgy little thing entering pre-school for the first time; Jack had hid at the back of the classroom near the dress-up clothes pile near the entire morning session, because the other children wouldn't stop trying to touch his white hair, as apparently they found it fascinating. Then, right after morning tea, in burst a fire tornado by the name of _Merida Dunbroch_â€| a little girl full of life and energy that immediately captivated everyone in the areaâ€| but wasn't afraid to shove off the hands reaching out to tug on her hair.

She'd noticed the 'wee little snowflake' hiding in the back of the room almost immediately, and after pushing and shoving her way through the other little kids, the girl had proceeded to don a fireman's helmet, a pair of clown shoes and a plastic bow and arrow before plonking right down beside him. "Hullo there, I'm Meridaâ€| I like your hair, c'mon out and we can play 'Robbing Hood!" she'd offered eagerly, coaxing him out with the lure of a shiny superhero cape she'd sifted through the pile and found for him, "You can beâ€| Little Johnâ€| you're small and I'm going to call you John!"

Several minutes later, the pair were firm friends as they ran about the room pretending to rescue fair maidens and princes from the 'evil dragon queen' â€"which was to say, the pair thoroughly disrupted the designated nap time by leading a revolution of tots against the teacher; who, to this day, claimed she had never seen anything funnier in her life. Of course, when their parents had learned of the event, there had been several completely different reactionsâ€| from laughter, to annoyance that their 'precious angels' were being taught bad habits, and some simply smiled, happy their tots had enjoyed themselves.

Jack's dads had been thrilled that their little man had not only made a friend but was having great fun at his new preschool; because he had always been a shy little boy and the pair had worried deep into the night before about how he would take separation from them. Father would never admit it openly, but in all honesty, it had been _he_ who had the most trouble leaving Jack at the preschool that day, of all of themâ€|

He also refused to admit driving past at lunchtime and peering in surreptitiously with a small band of other mothers and fathers on their lunchbreaks, also somewhat anxious about their little onesâ€|

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When it came to the little fire-princess, her parents were a sight to see, and utterly adored their 'wee babbie girl', as evidenced by how they reacted to the news of the '_viva the revowution_!' as Merida had put it to them when the teacher came over to explain between

chortles.

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Merida's dad petted her head and laughed in thorough amusement at her antics, claiming she was a right 'chip off the old block' to her equally unamused mother; the woman always seemed to be in an impeccable state of poise and dress, and that day had been no exception, though her beautiful face had worn a look of distressed disdain at Merida's behaviour. He'd gone up and tugged on her pencil-skirt once, twice, three times and politely waited for her to look at him before saying, "I'm sorry, please don't be upset with Merida, it was my fault we were naughtyâ€| she was making me feel better 'cause I was scaredâ€|"

If it wasn't the words that had halted the oncoming storm, then it was definitely the wide, teary blue eyes in combination with the trembling lip and puppy pout; no one could resist that. The cunning little boy had worked that out a long time agoâ€|

And like that, Mrs. Dunbroch had melted like a snowdrift on a warm day; she had kindly petted his head and picking a giggling Merida up to pelt her with kisses until the little girl shrieked with laughter, and her father joined in. Dad and Father had come over from where the pair had been watching the interaction warily, both had been smiling as they'd introduced himself as Jack's parents to the Dunbrochs, neither of whom batted an eye or acted as disgusted as the nasty teacher-ladies from his last pre-schoolâ€| which was why he was only just starting at the '_Dragongate Preschool_' today, half-way through the first week of the 'school year'.

Her dad and his had hit it off instantly, loudly discussing all manner of things at ear-shattering volume, as Mrs. Dunbroch and Father talked business, suits, university studies, parenting strategiesâ€| all the grown-up stuff that bored the two little kids who wiggled and squirmed for the next few minutes until the adults finally came around to organizing a play-date for them for the following afternoon. And thus, the pair became inseparableâ€|

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Primary school had been a mixture of fun and confusion, as it was for everyone trying to grasp the basic fundamentals of the English language and of course that number voodoo they insisted on calling a subject, mathematics. Mostly, Jack's hair was merely a curiosity, the same as Merida's accentâ€| but there was always one little brat '_too big for their britches' _every year that always had something to say about one or the other; of courseâ€| they only ever said it the once. Usually in a high, scared voice as the fiery warrior princess got right up in their face and demanded they '_say it again ta mae face, ye wee rascal'_â€|

Sure, a few taunts knocked Jack's timid confidence back, but Merida was always there to drag it on back up again when they spent time together after school, usually on her family's fancy estate just out of town; Father had specifically forbidden archery practice in their own small backyard after the comparatively tiny patio barbecue had taken an arrow too many and keeled over for the final time, rather dramatically, one afternoon in Grade Five. Ohâ€| and maybe the tragic

death of a certain prized pot-plant of geraniums on the same day had also had some small bearing on the decisionâ€|

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In any case, the pair were inseparable, seldom seen without the other on any occasion (or so went the rumours flittering up and down the school corridors amongst the mindless chatter of gossip). Not to mention their parents got on like a house on fire!

By seventh year, the whole school assumed they were dating; but the truth was, it was nothing like that at all. In fact, by the time Jack had progressed to the eighth grade, he had finally figured out something about himself that Merida had known all alongâ€| though she still gave him a hug and talked it out with him until late in the evening.

There were a few hiccups along the way through the first few years of high school of course. The two stood out like beacons, being both different and uniquely attractive, and many of the older students with more lecherous minds had it in their heads to take them as trophy partners to flaunt to the others of their age. Jack fended off his amorous suitors from day one with polite declinations, whereas Merida basically handed them their tattered dignity and told them to shove offâ€|

Not to say that in amongst the perilous hazards of homework, classes, assignments and extra-curricular activities, there were no adventures into romantic entanglements of any kind whatsoever; because there were. Jack occasionally had to sullenly deal with some boy or other muscling their way into Merida's affections by besting her at a sporting event â€"never archery though, no one could ever best her at that; she had always had a real affinity for sports, much to her mother's dismay. Mrs. Dunbroch would rather her daughter focus more on academics, so she might take over the family law firm in futureâ€|

Though he never came out and openly said it during these times, it was plain to even those around them that the fleeting relationships Merida engaged in were less romantic than they were competitiveâ€| her way of luring an opponent in, knocking them off guard and besting them. The majority of them never got to even hold her hand, let alone receive a kiss from the fire-haired athletic championâ€| but the chance for some barely-pubescent boy to say with pride that Merida Dunbroch was their girlfriend for a week or so was something that overrode that all.

Jack often prided himself on being the only boy Merida had ever kissed; of courseâ€| they were only play-acting a wedding for Drama that one time, but it had been brilliant to see the looks of envy and dismay being thrown his way all week long after that from several dozen of her closest male admirers.

Brilliant for the ego... even if it had felt like kissing his sister at the time and they couldn't look at each other without bursting into embarrassed giggles for the rest of the day.

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For the entirety of their eighth and ninth years of education, Jack

never once felt anything but a passing fancy for those around him; nothing strong enough to act uponâ€¦ though he doubted anyone would say a thing about it if he did, the school had a zero-tolerance policy when it came to bullying and they already knew about his dads.

Besides, he wasn't the only one here with that particular inclinationâ€¦ there were plenty of open couples of all genders and all sexualities; only one person, a new 'tough guy' from another school in the district who thought badmouthing was the way to go, had made a particularly vile remark about a pair of senior girls who had been together since grade nine. His gang name was a shudder-worthy name like 'Snotlout', but apparently his real name was Simon Louton, it kind of made sense in the end; the boy had sinus issues as a little tyke and well, that got messy.

No one was sure what had happened, but the boy had returned to school the next day clearly shaken, not a mark on him, but politer than ever before and clearly more at ease in the new environment. Turns out, when the truth arose much later in the year, an anonymous someone had taken the time to sit down and talk with him, found out the reason for his animosity was merely a defensive front to prevent the thugs from his last school from realizing 'the truth'.

He had ended up graduating valedictorian the same year Jack and Merida finished grade nine; Simon and his boyfriend Freddy 'Fisher' Legsume had been voted 'Cutest Couple' that year. Just goes to show what a positive attitude this school had on all peopleâ€¦

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That example was what made Jack feel safe here at Nightfury High School â€" _an oddly named highschool_, but the founder had been foreign, so it all worked out in the end; not to mention, it sounded awesome to shout at football games and pep rallies!

Merida too was the safety net to his often ungraceful acrobatics-slash-juggling act of academics, athletics, expectations and extra-curricular activities, just as he was hers when it came to certain subjects. Those quadratic equations were like a cocked gun to the temple for Merida, she just HATED them with a vengeanceâ€¦ and he could respect that; after all, without her, he might as well just give up on the P.E. track and field modules altogether. Why couldn't throwing a shotput, or a discus be like tossing a snowball? Why did it have to be precise and difficultâ€¦?

When he'd said as much to the fourteen year old fire hair, she'd laughed and hugged him, "Oh, my poor wee snowflake, don't you worry, I'll come and save you when you need itâ€¦ you just focus on finding a way to explain that there witchcraft to me." She had, of course, indicated their mathematics assignment lying half-scrunched on the bed between them and grimaced; it was due the following Friday, and neither of them truly fancied dealing with it just then.

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His Father's accent wafted up from the downstairs lounge room, Mrs. Dunbroch's voice chattering amicably in response with occasional interjections from her husband. Dad was away today, presenting some new Christmas-themed items to representatives of a European toy firm

called, Plasco Funtime International Incorporated, which Jack had always advocated was the most ridiculous name for a toy company he'd ever heard -a statement that would always be laughingly agreed with.

So it was just the three adults sipping coffee and discussing little things, like the big case Merida's mother had just won for a wrongly-accused celebrity, or the upcoming release of Father's new book in the Seasons of Eternity series, 'When Snow Hits Flame'. The gripping series was about a pair of protagonists that seemed veeeeeery similar in description to the two teens listening in, with only the slight variation of the male protagonist having fiery red hair, and the heroine of the story, ice cold white locks that cascaded out of control.

It was the second book, right after, 'When Earth Devours Sky', which had them both gripped from the first line; but the final chapter had made them both linger about Jack's house of an afternoon making sad eyes at his Father for months afterwards, given the huge cliffhanger left one of the characters near life or death with no resolution or promise of continuation.

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Father had made a deal with Jack the previous year, that if he could write a plausible short draft about what he thought was going to happen next, then 'E.B.' would read it and see if it sparked off an idea for a second book; Jack had agreed, and together with Merida, they had completed a fanfiction of the same name as the new book, co-incidentally enough|

He had silently preened for days on end after his Father had read the fanfiction avidly devouring each of the half-dozen chapters they had written, praised and professionally critiqued it, and then taken to his study; where only the sound of frantic typing could be heard for days on end. Dad being the only one who could coax the re-invigorated author out of the office for food or rest during the full fortnight the brilliant man had taken to complete the rough draft; it was brilliant, but basic, he always embellished further in the second and third edits, before handing in a final draft.

Now the book had been published and was ready for its long-anticipated, world-wide release. The then-fourteen-year-olds had been treated to a private read-through of the book before it had gone to final publishing; which was brilliant, but left two small problems| the first was that they couldn't talk to anyone about what they knew yet as they'd been sworn to secrecy| and the second, was that this book ALSO had a cliffhanger. Because apparently Father didn't think his readers had suffered enough already|

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In anycase, the adults were loudly discussing the official release date of the new novel downstairs this one particular afternoon of autumn, and the teens upstairs were procrastinating the rather evil assignment that had been handed to them the previous Monday. Their playful banter had lapsed into a comfortable silence a while back as they stared out the window at the swaying crimson leaves, homework forgotten for the moment| when Merida casually stated, "So, there might be a girl I have a thing for at school| the new one, with all

the long blond hair" | "

Jack nearly fell off the bed, "Wait, _what_?", his icy eyes were wide in surprise. Oh, the girl part might have been obvious for more than a semester by now, at least to Jack, but" | "

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"Rapunzel Solaris?" he choked out, the image of the new student vivid in his mind. She'd been homeschooled the majority of her life due to childhood illness and was still finding fitting into high school difficult; though Jack did his best to give her a hand when possible, there were still so many things the lovely, artistic girl was oblivious about. Societal conventions and cliques sometimes went beyond the scope of the idealistic blonde's ability to understand, and that's where he came in; for the last half-term he'd been her assigned 'buddy', from way back when Rapunzel had joined the class. A Buddy was the student who was paired to a new or transfer student to show them around and help them fit in; and the white-haired boy had always taken that duty seriously" | "

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It generally helped that Rapunzel herself was a bright, brilliant person who was easy to get along with.

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He loved her, sure, she was bright and funny, great at art, good with animals, had a weird thing for bursting into song every so often -which was one of the many spontaneous, endearing qualities of being Rapunzel; but in all honesty she was practically the opposite side of the coin to Merida. Just trying to picture the pair together in his imagination was causing something of a paradoxical feedback loop" | "_aaaaaaaand_ now he had a headache.

The young Frost blinked as his name was called by an exasperated voice, for what was probably the fourth or fifth time; unconsciously, he already knew it was Merida. Said redhead had been staring at him patiently for a good five minutes, waiting as patiently as she could for his response to "what for her was a gigantic revelation to someone she trusted implicitly- when he finally managed an, "Oh" | brilliant but" | "_Rapunzel_? You two are so diff-" | what I mean to say is that _you're_ so-" | and _she's_ _so-" | so-" | "

"Soft spoken? Sweet? Adorable? A wee lass with strange ideas and a lovely voice? Hair that makes you just want to comb through it for hours on end? _That_ Rapunzel? Why _yes_,_ Jack" | _that_ one. I don't know" | I just" | there's something about her that I can't help but love with every inch of me, and if you ever tell anyone I said something that sappy I will personally use you for target practice. Do you hear me?" she threatened, holding a pillow menacingly.

Jack had laughed and shielded his face with both arms pre-emptively as he childishly chanted in a sing-song voice, "_Merida loves Rapunzel! Merida loves Rapunzel! _First comes love, then comes marriage, then comes the '_babbies_' in the carri-" | _oof!" He took the pillow to the face rather hard.

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Merida frowned and seemed to remember something, "Oh, rightâ€¦ did I tell you I'm gonna be a big sister soon? Triplets they sayâ€¦ what am I going to do with all those wee ones running about?" Her large, expressive eyes narrowed as a seemingly sinister thought apparently crossed her mind, "Or should I say, what are WE going to do about the wee ones coming, _soon-tae-be big brother_, Jack?"

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He had had no answer for her.

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By January the following year, their afternoon visits to one another's houses often included the ringing sounds of three identical 'babbie' boys alternating between wails and gurgles of delight, parental laughter, and embarrassing stories about when Merida and Jack were the same age. Talk about death by mortificationâ€¦

By this time, of course, their tenth year of education had rolled around with only three major differencesâ€¦

The first being that Merida had successfully asked Rapunzel out a few months previously and the imaginative blonde slotted into their odd little clique perfectly; the second was that between the two of them, they had convinced Merida to take up Drama as an elective subject and she was cast opposite Jack in the upcoming production of _Macbeth_. Thirdly, and most importantly of all the three -the young Frost had finally discovered he had a crush on the new transfer student, Hiccup Haddockâ€¦

And Merida had not let him forget it for one single minuteâ€¦

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The boy had come out of seemingly nowhere to join them unexpectedly at the beginning of Year 10; it was only later that certain key facts came to light. Hiccup Haddock the Third -that was quite literally the boy's name, not some odd nickname as Jack had first thought; something of a local superstition to give the kids in his village a terrifying name to ward off the boogey man or some-such supernatural baddy of myth and legend. From the tiny, isolated coastal town of _Berk_ that not many had heard of and wasn't located on any map, the brunette teen was something of a genius outcast; apparently the reason he was here was due to the fact the local school only went to grade nine, and this was the first anyone had requested to continue education past there inâ€¦ wellâ€¦ _ever_.

Unlike at Nightfury High, the previous small-town school's teachers had treated his different way of seeing things and inventive ingenuity with scorn and disdain; the fact he was a little on the scrawny, lanky side was also a factor. The way it was done over there was very distinctive, you learned the basics â€"or just slept through class, no one cared either way_- with the option to drop out whenever you felt like it, and then went to work in one of the various trades at age fourteen or so. Most of the town were hunters, but Hiccup just didn't have it in him; the brilliant brunette had been sneakily inventing and blacksmithing things in his free time instead of learning how to hunt, track and kill gameâ€¦ which was

what landed him in trouble.

As the mayor's son, he was supposed to be a beacon of the town's ideals; some large, rugged, ruthless animal killer and all-round badassâ€¦ just thinking about it and picturing Hiccup at the same time was hilarious. He just wasn't a killer, you could see it in his eyesâ€¦ and the way he handled his little black fox cub, Toothless; that was a quality Jack adored about the other boy, you know, apart from his brains, appearance, ingenuity and soulful green eyes. When he tried to explain it to Merida, she let out a sharp bark of laughter and fell off of his bed, leaving Rapunzel wide-eyed in concern atop it.

So, as a compromise, Hiccup had been sent to Nightfury High with strict orders to come back home changed, or not at all; they couldn't use 'his kind' out there in Berkâ€¦ though the boy advocated they could. "_There has to be SOME brain in amongst all that Brawnâ€¦_" Jack had once heard him mutter sadly, stroking his tiny cub during recess as Rapunzel made conversation.

Given the insane amount of distance between the coastal town and the high school, naturally the boy had to stay somewhere in the area, and who better to offer a room to him than Rapunzel's family? Nobility or something like that, went back a long way; all Jack really knew was that their new residence was a large mansion only ten minutes from town, and five minutes from Merida's family estate â€"which worked out well for them all.

When the request for housing a new transfer student had gone out in an email, there were about fourteen replies; of those, two were chosen â€"Rapunzel's house and Jack's. Both had extra bedrooms, but Jack's parents were going away the week that Hiccup arrived, so Rapunzel's palatial mansion was chosen, with his house as a back-up, in case of emergency. The white-haired teen stayed with Merida and her family that week, which meant that he got to know Hiccup quite well that first week, as Rapunzel was almost always with himâ€¦ and where she was, Merida wasâ€¦ which meant Jack was never far behind.

Toothless was a surprise, he had to admit.

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Reluctant to speak about it at first, Hiccup had finally told them all about the night he had acquired the little black-furred fox cub; on his first 'hunt' unsupervised, he'd been trying to prove himself a ruthless killer who deserved to be part of the tribeâ€¦ but when he came across the body of a vixen, with her one tiny little cub snuggled into the cold corpseâ€¦

Well, to put it mildly, something within the teen snapped. Logically, he knew if he was remorseless and just killed the kit, he could be one of the others, attend the special hunting course that all his peers were engaged or enrolled in. His dad might even smile at him, or be proud to have him as a son, despite his lack of physical prowess; butâ€¦ as he knelt next to the tiny creature, knife raised high, the little thing had looked at him with the most soulful, dewy eyes the brunette had ever seen.

The knife had fallen away, uselessâ€¦ there was no way in the world

that Hiccup could have killed the tiny thing; it was just as scared and sad as he was the day his mother died. It had made sad whimpering noises when he picked it up, snarling its non-existent teeth at the boy, but belaying that disgruntlement to snuggle into the warmth of his hand. '_Toothless_' was named that night, and was smuggled into the village under cover of darkness, hidden in Hiccup's green shirt; there had been awkward moments when the boy had to pretend the mewling of the cub was merely a disgruntled stomach â€"earning him many an odd look, he assured the listeners timidly, with adorably flushed cheeks.

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Jack loved the weirdly dreamy-yet-parental look that crossed the boy's face as he'd described to the other three enthralled teens how, at first, the fox cub had had to be fed every few hours with a cloth dipped in milk, and tinged with the tiniest bit of honey to entice. Not to mention the hilarious mis-adventures Hiccup had had to cover up in the interests of 'Toothless' continued longevity; including one time that the brunette was forced to pretend that he had accidentally partially-devoured his father's favourite hunting hat while sleepwalking. Certain tiny, midnight-furred fox cubs had been teething at the time and couldn't be trusted with anything other than the leather chew-toy Hiccup eventually made for himâ€|

And then, the boy's face had taken on a look of fury and terror that made the young Frost want to wrap his arms about him; stuck watching enviously as Rapunzel moved to do so, Merida handing the fox cub she had been stroking back to Hiccup, because he seemed lost without it right in that moment.

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As it turns out, mere days before Hiccup was meant to move into Rapunzel's home, with the whole 'further education situation' finally simmering down now that the 'town problem' was leaving, the worst possible thing had happened; his father found Toothless. The shudder that went through the teen as he said that made the little black puffball let out an odd yip and snuggle deeply into the boy's lap, a tiny pink tongue darting out to touch the closest hand.

"He threatened to kill him, make him into a pouch as a going-away present," Hiccup had whispered with a haunted expression, "And when I told him that Toothless was my _bab_-â€|. er, _mine_â€| and if he touched him I would end him. He, uh, kinda got offended that I'd chosen an animal over my dad, and maybe, sortaâ€| disowned me a little? Honestly, I didn't really care. Took a little of the pressure off too, no more running out into the forest to kill things. Anyway, this little guy here comes firstâ€| even if I did have to nibble a grimy old hat for him on four separate occasionsâ€|"

Hiccup pasted a dorky sort of timid smile on his face and shrunk in on himself as he said the last part, whereas Toothless did the complete opposite. The four had fallen about laughing as the fox cub decided that right then was a good time to paste the vilest little grin on his face and peer about at the quartet of teens, as if he understood what had just been said. The pair were like _ying and yang_, just perfect.

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It was then that Jack had truly realized just how much he felt for the lanky brunette, and also, how to go about gaining the other boy's affection; and it all had to do with the tiny little creature giving him a piercing stare from the other boy's lap. Er, not that he was staring avidly at the other boy's crotch for any other reasonâ€|

Merida had snorted loudly as she noticed that not only had the pale boy started flushing pink, but also where his gaze was aimed; he remembered her rescue remedy at the time was to punch him in the arm, in a friendly manner, and stage-whisper that he needed to _stop gawking at the wee laddie and just kiss him already!_

Both boys had been so surprised they hadn't been able to look at one another for a week afterwards without lighting up like a Christmas tree.

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Though, soonâ€| maybe a fortnight later, a chance encounterâ€| Jack had found Toothless ambling about the school corridors; the fox cub was all of three months old and quite mobile, the principal had been kind enough to allow Hiccup to keep the ebony furball with him during school hours until the little guy could be left at home during the day by himself. He was still quite small, and Hiccup augmented his small meals of meat and mushy baby fox-foods that the local vet had given him, with honeyed milk; though from a bottle these days. Rapunzel's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Solaris, were kind enough to procure a bottle small enough for the little creature they too had become enamored with.

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Fortuitously, Jack found Toothless first and snatched him up before the bell went off and the tiny thing was lost in the sea of humanity that came flooding past on their way to lunch or study rooms. Moments after the mad rush had subsided, a distraught looking Hiccup had come down the hallway, eyes glued to the floor and hands tugging at his shaggy hair, muttering over and over. "_Oh no, where_**is**_that blasted furballâ€| he's got to be here somewhereâ€| Toooooooooothleeeeeess?_"

Just as Jack had opened his mouth to say something, hand raised in a familiar gesture of greeting, the brunette barreled into him; both of them tumbling over, with Jack curling protectively around Toothless out of some instinct he couldn't quite explain. Hiccup had pretty much freaked out, no other word for it, thinking he had done the other boy a serious injury because of the ball-like state he'd gone into. With a laugh, and a groan, the Frost had unfurled to reveal a safe and happy little midnight-black fox cub, wiggling happily and squeaking at the brunette.

"You found him? YOU FOUND HIM! Oh my goodness, he wandered off during artâ€| and _then I panicked_ because _where was he_ and-â€| oh, uh, I'm sorry," Hiccup had sheepishly grinned, releasing Jack from the octopus-like hold he was maintaining on the pale teen. "I tend to do things without thinking sometimes, because thinking all the time used to get me in trouble, and of courseâ€| you know that alreadyâ€| but anyway, thank you for finding him, I don't know what I'd do without

the little guy. Sorry about the hug, probably just a result of my twisted childhood, but I swear to you -â€|"

The white-haired heart-throb's mind was starting to hurt, trying to keep up with Hiccup's flurried speech which was ever-increasing in speed and pitch, so he did the only thing he could think to do to calm the boy downâ€|

Jack leaned across the seemingly invisible space between them, and kissed the brunette fair on the swiftly-moving lips; no mean feat in itself, more of a face battle than a passionate expression of his never-ending sexual frustration around the adorable genius. There was dead silence for a moment, as the pair were supposedly the only two in the deserted corridor, and the stiffness meeting his affectionate action was somewhat disheartening. For a millisecond, he had found himself thinking that he may have _majorly_ misjudged the situation and was about to draw backâ€| when suddenly, Hiccup responded by leaning into the kiss and relaxing his stance. Jack smiled and opened his eyes to meet those of the stunned, flushed Hiccupâ€| there had been no doubt in his mind that his expression was similar.

The moment felt like it had lasted for both, all of eternity, and yet no time at all; he was kind of disappointed as they moved apart only an inch or so. Jack's heart beating too fast inside his chest, watching intensely as the other looked away and rubbed his arm, panting; expression confused and uncertain, with a violent tinge of exuberance, butâ€| there was something else to the expression that seemed almost as if the other teenager had just opened a gift from Santa on Halloween. The moment was marred by the loud applause and lewd wolf-whistles in an accent that could only possibly be from Merida, combined with the hummingbird-like clapping of Rapunzel; who-â€| _oh no, she wouldn't_-â€|

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â€|she would.

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Rapunzel burst into song there and then, forcing both parties to lose it as her unusual rendition of '_Kiss the Girl_' from The Little Mermaid rang out, and Merida completely lost it, hitting the floor on her knees and laughing so hard she started to turn pink of cheek. Jack had returned Toothless to Hiccup and suddenly found himself incapable of speech, but surprisingly, the brunette had haltingly asked if maybeâ€| if Jack wasn't too busyâ€| he might like to go out sometimeâ€| because he kind of liked the frost-haired boy too?

The noise Jack had made had not been human, _nor was the backflip he did to celebrate anything a normal, non-rubberised human-being, physically capable of_â€| as far as the onlookers were concerned. In lieu of an answer, he'd just kissed Hiccup again, right in time for the next bell to ring and give the entire school's worth of students a good show.

It had been a good first semester of their tenth year, that was for certain.

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Over the period of the two years, the pair had become quite a strong couple; the only snag to ever truly hit their relationship was the whole, 'telling of the parents' obligation. While skeptical that Jack professing his 'undying love' in a rather Shakespearean manner to the newest boy in school was the best idea, his parents came to love the little genius who seemed to be the other side of their snow-haired son's proverbial coin. Their only rules the parental units implemented revolved around an open-door policy, the promise that any and all sleepovers had to include Merida _and-slash-or_ Rapunzel if the parental units were not available, and there would be _no sneaky snoo-snoo_ on their watchâ€| not while the two were underage, at least. Jack and Hiccup accepted this as fair enough.

It was actually dealing with Hiccup's father that was the difficult part; just getting ahold of the man by technological means was like trying to hack the pentagon using a _Speak-n-Sayâ€|_

â€|practically _mission impossible_.

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Berk didn't really like technology, except for weaponry for hunting or the machines in the abattoir, which were practical; there was only one small telephone in the town, at the taxidermist's, for orders and the like. Many attempts at contacting the Mayor of Berk later, and a gruff conversation of grunts and silence later; Hiccup was given permission to bring his friends, and Jack's parents, with him to visit his hometown and speak directly with his father.

Some days, Jack almost wished they hadn't gone.

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~*To Be Continued...*~

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